

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

The materials you will receive in this training session are designed to assist you and your department in complying with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Act).

Effective January 1, 2003 and every even number year thereafter, each state agency is required to develop an Implementation Plan (Government Code Section 7299.4 that addresses the following: (d) (5)) "... training the agency provides to its staff on the provision of services to non-or limited- English speaking individuals."

By utilizing the information provided in this training session, you will be able to develop your own training packet that includes written procedures on how best to provide customer service training to all of your department's public contacts and samples of handouts that you can duplicate or assist in building your own public contact training tools.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

Developing Your Public Contact Staff Training Presentation

1. Who should attend the Customer Service training session?

- a. All public contact employees that communicate with LEP, English speaking, and hearing impaired, and disabled customers requesting access to the services rendered by the department.
- b. Inform your management that as the BSP coordinator, you receive guidance for the State Personnel Board's Bilingual Services Program to assist your department in complying with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Act) and you are encouraged to give the training to the public contact staff. If you cannot give the training, it should be assigned to someone else identified by your department.
- c. Several training sessions should be held to ensure all public contact staff could attend.
- d. Notify the attendees in advance (one-month). Send confirmation/reminder e-mail one week before the training.
- e. If your budget allows and you have approval, ask if you can travel to some of your local offices to conduct the training.
- f. Think about video taping your training session and make this available to all your public contact staff via the intranet.

2. Where should the training sessions be held?

- a. If you are a small department with one office, you can probably reserve one of your conference rooms and invite everyone.
- b. If you are a large department with multiple field offices, you may decide to hold the training at different locations or, you can invite those that can travel to your location.
- c. Send the training packet to those field offices that cannot attend and check with your Information Technology Unit if you can place the training material on your department's intranet website.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

3. How should the training session begin?

- a. Have a sign-in sheet that allows the attendees to add their name, work location, telephone number and e-mail address.
- b. Thank the attendees for taking the time to come to the training.
- c. Introduce yourself and share your duties as a bilingual services coordinator.
- d. Allow each of your attendees to introduce each other and identify their work location and discuss how they assist the public.

4. The Training Session

- a. Give a brief explanation of the Act and how state departments are mandated to provide an equal level of service to California's diverse population.
- b. Explain your department's commitment to comply with the Act.
- c. Provide an overview of the volume of public contacts (English and non-English) received by your department (pull data from the last language survey).
- d. Discuss the types of services your department provides to all public contacts (English forms, translated forms, 1-800 toll free lines in English and non-English languages, availability of bilingual staff, bilingual resources for providing services to LEP customers, where they are located and how they can be attained, if not in a central location.)
- e. Show the SPB LEP video " Language Assistance for Limited-English Proficient (LEP) Persons: Your Responsibilities under the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act".
- f. Discuss the video.
- g. Create a powerpoint presentation of your training material, or distribute your handouts and explain each one.
- h. Allow for discussion after each handout.
- i. At the end of the training, have a question and answer session.
- j. If questions are asked and you do not know the answer, obtain the person's name (you already have their contact information on the sign-in sheet) and tell them that you will research the question and get back to them. You may want to e-mail the response to all attendees.
- k. Remind attendees to make sure they signed in.
- l. Thank your attendees for their participation.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

5. Handouts

- a. Any customer service training handouts available by your department.
- b. Language Identification Guide.
- c. Bilingual Employee Resource List.
- d. List of department's public contact documents and those that are translated.
- e. Information on Telephone Interpreter Services Contract (if applicable).
- f. List of dictionaries, glossaries, videos, audio tapes, review your departments website to review public contact information, translation aides, or any other bilingual resources available to employees.
- g. SPB handouts.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

VOICE TONE TECHNIQUES THAT QUICKLY BUILD A HEALTHY RAPPORT WITH THE PUBLIC

Voice Techniques – Providing Over the Telephone Customer Service

- The tone in your voice can control a phone call
- Tone can create a positive first and lasting impression
- Tone can also assist in delivering a negative message in a positive way while increasing acceptance and understanding
- Tone can satisfy a customer's emotional needs
- Tone can transform an unhappy customer into a satisfied one without supervisor intervention
- Tone can deliver courtesy, demonstrate kindness and build a relationship with you and your public contact

Voice Techniques – Providing In Person Customer Service

- The tone in your voice can control a face-to-face encounter with a person
- Tone can create a positive first and lasting impression
- Tone can also assist in delivering a negative message in a positive way while increasing acceptance and understanding
- Tone can satisfy a customer's emotional needs
- Tone can transform an unhappy customer into a satisfied one without supervisor intervention
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DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

Disability Etiquette

People with disabilities come from all socioeconomic, ethnic and racial groups. They read, speak, and communicate through many languages and methods. Regardless of their disability, generally, they prefer to be viewed as people first, with their disability considered second.

- When culturally appropriate, make eye contact and direct your communication to the individual with a disability. If they are not alone, do not direct your comments to their companion.
- Use a normal speaking tone and style. If someone needs you to speak in a louder voice, they will ask you to do so.
- Do not focus on the disability, but on the individual and the issue at hand. If you are uncertain about what to do, ask. Most people would rather answer a question about protocol than be in an uncomfortable situation.
- Assistive devices (canes, wheelchairs, crutches, communication boards, etc.) should always be respected as personal property. Unless given specific and explicit permission, do not move, play with, or use them.
- When having an extended conversation (more than a minute or two) with someone in a wheelchair or of short stature, try to kneel or find a chair. This way they are not looking up at you and eye contact is much easier for both parties.
- Remember that people with disabilities, like all people, are most knowledgeable about themselves. They know what they like, what they don't like, and what they can and cannot do.
- Do not make assumptions about people with disabilities. They are, most likely, a lot like you. They have families, friends, feelings, frustrations and fun.
- If and when you make a mistake with an etiquette issue, apologize, correct the problem, learn from the mistake and move on.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

Guidelines for Providing Appropriate Services to People with Foreign Accents

DO

- Listen carefully. Chances are that they can communicate their need/issue.
- Be patient. Most people that know they have an accent tend to speak slowly purposely to ensure they are being understood.
- If in person, smile. By smiling, you are letting the person that you are providing customer service and are willing to allow them to explain themselves.
- Let them know you know they have an accent. You can say, "I notice that you have an accent, what is your native language".
- Let them know that they are entitled to an interpreter. You can say. "I know that you are speaking to me in English and that you are struggling with some of the words, "would you like me to locate someone that speaks your native language".
- Make sure you understand the LEP person. If you are working without the assistance of an interpreter because the LEP person chose not to have one, repeat what the customer said to ensure you understood him/her correctly.

DO NOT

- Raise your voice or yell at the person. Speaking loudly will not increase their ability to understand you.
- Say you don't understand what they are saying. You can ask them to repeat the question.
- Be impatient. If you take the time to listen, you may not need the use of an interpreter.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

Guidelines for Providing Appropriate Services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Customers

In-Person

If you encounter an in-person visitor who is requesting services and you feel you are not effectively communicating with them in English:

Attempt to ascertain from the individual whether or not they would prefer communicating through an interpreter. You should do so by asking”:

“Would you prefer to have an interpreter assist you in a language other than English”?

You may provide them with a copy of the “Notice of Interpreter Services”, if you think that would assist them in understanding your question. If they respond “no”, continue to assist them in English. If you detect a foreign accent, but the person is attempting to communicate with you, be patient and allow the person to speak. However, if they respond that they would like the assistance of an interpreter, or you don’t think they understood your question, then:

Do

- Communicate with the person in English to the extent necessary to assist them in accessing interpreter services.
- Utilize the language identification card to identify the non-English language the LEP contact person speaks.
- Refer to the list of Bilingual Employees and determine if they are certified or proficient in the language spoken by the LEP person, if one is available in your department. Contact the department’s bilingual employee and request their assistance.
- If no bilingual staff is available, contact your telephone interpreter service contractor. If you do not have a contract with a telephone interpreter service, contact the SPB for service.
- Contact your supervisor immediately if you are having difficulty providing service to the LEP person.
- If your supervisor is unavailable, contact your bilingual services coordinator.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

DO NOT

- Raise your voice or yell at the person. Speaking loudly will not increase their ability to understand you.
- Use hand gestures or arm movements to communicate with the person. Many hand gestures or arm movements can be insulting in some cultures and is not an appropriate manner for increasing communication.
- Speak down to the person or make inappropriate comments or facial expressions that could be conceived as belittling the person due to their inability to communicate in English.
- Ask strangers, children or other non-certified interpreters to provide interpreter services. You may use these individuals to determine the non-English language the person speaks and to communicate to them, that you are locating an interpreter to assist them.
- Ask the LEP person to come back later or to bring his or her own interpreter with them.
- Use children as interpreters. If this is your only recourse, make sure that you have a certified bilingual employee contact the LEP person within 24 hours to ensure they understood the employee.

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

Every day you face situations when what you say to your customers makes or breaks the service interactions. Following, we list ten phrases to avoid because they drive customers nuts – and our recommended alternatives for delivering the message in a more polite and helpful way.

1. Instead of: " I Don't Know".
Say: "I'll find out."

When you say "I don't know, your customer often hear it as, "I don't have the information you want, and I am not going out of my way to get it." By offering to find the answer to your customers' questions, even if doing so means taking a little extra time researching or checking with another department, you score service points for going the extra mile.

2. Instead of: "No."
Say: "What I can do is..."
Inevitably, you sometimes have to say no to a customer's request. Rather than using what we call a hard no—where no options or alternatives are provided—focus on what you can do for your customers. Starting your sentence with "What I can do is..." shows customers that you are taking a problem-solving approach to their situation.

3. Instead of: " That's Not My Job".
Say: "This is who can help you..."
When customers ask you to do something that you don't have the authority or knowledge to carry out, become a catalyst by leading the customer to the person or department who can help solve his problem.

4. Instead of: "You're right, this stinks."
Say: "I understand your frustration."
If a customer expresses annoyance at something another person or department has done, don't make matters worse by commiserating with him. Instead of agreeing by saying

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

something like, "You're right, this place stinks," express empathy for the customer's feelings by saying "I understand how frustrating this must be. "Empathy is showing care and concern without agreeing or disagreeing with what the customer is saying.

5. Instead of: "That's Not My Fault."

Say: "Let's see what we can do about this."

If an angry customer seems to be accusing you of creating a problem for her, the natural reaction is to become defensive. However, if you allow this reaction to take over, your mind becomes closed to hearing what the customer has to say. So when you find the words "That's not my fault" on the tip of your tongue, stop, take a breath, and then, with all the empathy you can muster, say, "Let's see what we can do about this." By resisting the urge to defend yourself, you can resolve the problem faster and with less stress.

6. Instead of: "You Need to Talk to My Manager."

Say: "I can help you."

Customer sometimes asks you for things that are a little outside of company policy or procedure. At such times, quickly passing them off to your manager is tempting. Instead, focus on what you can do to help them. If your manager does need to be involved, take the initiative to go to him or her yourself and return to the customer with a solution in hand. Doing so makes you the service hero in the customers' eyes.

7. Instead of: "You Want It By When?"

Say: "I'll try my best."

When customers make demands by asking you for something that is unreasonable and difficult to provide, your first reaction may be annoyance. However, because you have little control over your customers' requests, the best approach is to hold off on your negative judgments and try your best to accommodate the requests. Don't promise something with the hope that you can deliver. Giving customers unrealistic expectations may get them off your back now but will blow up in your face later. Do

DEVELOPING TRAINING OR WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC CONTACT STAFF TRAINING

make promises that you know you can accomplish and assure them, with confidence and enthusiasm, that you know how important their deadline is and that you will try your best to meet it.

8. Instead of: "Calm Down?"

Say: "I'm sorry."

When customers are upset, angry frustrated or concerned, telling them to calm down is like saying that their feelings don't matter. If you want your customers to calm down, take the opposite approach and apologize. Apologizing does not mean you are agreeing with the customers' point of view, or that you are admitting guilt, it means that you are sorry for what has happened and the negative impact has had on them.

9. Instead of: "I'm Busy Right Now."

Say: I'll be with you in just a moment."

Stopping and assisting another customer who is asking for your help isn't always easy, especially when you are already in the middle of serving a customer. Some service providers handle this situation by tossing out a curt, "I'm too busy right now" at the customer, which is their way of saying, "why are you bothering me, can't you see I'm busy?" Stellar service providers use a better approach by saying, "I'll be with you in just a moment." This little sentence, along with a pleasant tone of voice, lets your customer know that you are aware of his presence and you will help him as soon as you are able.

10. Instead of: "Call Me Back."

Say: "I will call you back."

Some customers requests take time for you to research and investigate and require further conversation at a later date. Follow-up phone conversations should always be initiated by you, not by the customer. When you are so busy that you are tempted to ask him or her to call you back—stop, be proactive, and take the initiative to call the customer back when you have taken care of the problem.